

TEXTILES AND APPAREL NEWSLETTER

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Announcing

Fiber Society Meeting

On October 11–13, TXA will host the 2004 Annual Meeting and Technical Conference of The Fiber Society. The meeting will feature two Nobel laureates, 59 scientific papers, and more than 30 posters. Participants from more than 20 countries are expected. Sessions will focus on fiber-reinforced composites, biomaterials, advances in fiber formation, advanced materials, and the interface of materials, technology and apparel design, mass customization and body scanning technology. Specific papers and posters will address civil and structural applications of composites, industrial materials, "green" composites, electrospinning, newly developed fibers, mathematical modeling, nanostructures and "smart" materials that are sensitive to environmental stimuli. To view the full program, see the website <http://fs.tx.ncsu.edu/Upcoming_Home.html>

"The conference should be useful to professionals and students interested in the latest research and applications pertaining to state-of-the-art fibers," says Kay Obendorf, a TXA professor. Dr. Obendorf and Dr. Anil Netravali, also a Cornell TXA professor, will co-chair the event with the Fiber Society vice president. Dr. Obendorf will begin a one-year term as president of the organization in January 2005.

The meeting is sponsored by U.S. Surgical, a subsidiary of Tyco Healthcare; Cornell's Department of Textiles and Apparel; Cornell Center for Materials Research; Cornell Bioengineering Program; and Albany International.

The Fiber Society <www.thefibersociety.org> is an international nonprofit professional and scientific association whose membership is dedicated to research in science, technology and engineering of fibers, and the use of these materials in the service of humanity.

ENGAGING YOUTH

New York State Make It Yourself with Wool Contest 2004

JEAN BONHOTAL

The Make It Yourself with Wool Contest is an exciting opportunity for anyone who likes to work with wool—sewing, felting, knitting or crocheting. The contest is fun and educational and all participants walk away with a prize.

The contest will be held October 16, 2004, 10AM – 2PM. It will take place at the 32nd Annual Sheep and Wool Festival in Rhinebeck, NY. (The Festival is October 16 and 17 so plan to spend a little extra time to see the numerous wool exhibits)

The NYS Make it Yourself with Wool Contest has five divisions:

- Pre-teens, age 12 and under
- Juniors, ages 13-16
- Senior, ages 17-24
- Adult age 25 years and older (as of 12/31/04)
- Made for others (any age)

The contest is divided into three parts—modeling the outfit, and garments judged on and off the participant. Garments can be sewn, knitted (by hand or machine), crocheted, or felted from fiber that is more than 60% wool. Short workshops/demonstrations related to working with wool will also be offered.

This year The National Make It Yourself With Wool Contest will be held in Sparks, NV, January 27-29, 2004. You must participate in the NYS Contest to be chosen for nationals.

Applications and flyers are enclosed. Submit applications by October 9 to:

Jean Bonhotal, 4483 Rte. 22, Lacona, NY 13083

Tel: 315-387-8050, Email: jfb40@tcenet.net
or

Ann Kelchlin, 3178 Route 7, Howes Cave, NY 12092

Tel: 518-296-8388, Email: kelchb@yahoo.com

Fall TXA Youth Activities

CHARLOTTE COFFMAN

In-Touch Science Workshop (September 30)

Beth Davis and Charlotte Coffman will offer a workshop, In-Touch Science: Plants & Engineering, for the Putnam/Westchester Nonpublic School Consortium in Westchester County. The audience will be teachers and classroom volunteers. If you are interested in hosting an In-Touch Science workshop in your area, check the website <<http://www.intouch.cornell.edu>> for details on schedules, topics, and cost.

Plants & Textiles: A Legacy of Technology Workshop (October 15)

Charlotte Coffman and Marcia Eames-Sheavly will conduct a workshop for participants at the New York State Association of Cornell Cooperative Extension 4-H Educators Conference in Lake George, NY. Check out their website <<http://www.cce.cornell.edu/4h/roar/>> and join us for an informative and enjoyable session.

Simple Gifts: Showcase of Excellence Poster (October 22)

This TXA poster and kit will be displayed in the Professional Enrichment Showcase of Excellence at Unified Family & Consumer Science Educators Conference in Albany, NY. Plan to attend this interesting conference <www.nysafcse.org/FACSAConference04.htm> and stop by the poster session.

Plants & Textiles: A Legacy of Technology Workshop (November 13)

Fran Kozen will conduct a workshop for participants at the New England New York Agriculture in the Classroom Regional Consortium Regional Educators Conference at the Suffolk County Farm & Education Center, Riverhead, NY. The theme is Agriculture Past and Present — Traditions and Innovations in Ag Literacy. Check out the full conference offerings at <<http://cerp.cornell.edu/aic/regional.htm>>

CONCERNING CONSUMERS

SPANDEX BLENDS: Easy Clothing Care or Even More Work?

*BETH HERGET

Since its introduction by DuPont in 1958, spandex has undergone many changes in styles, uses, and popularity. The most recent trend is to blend spandex with other fibers, a fashion statement advertised by most clothing brands as their new "stretch" lines. Even the most conservative clothing firms have made way for the modern look of spandex combined with other synthetic and natural fibers: Brooks Brothers has two dress shirt collections with a small percentage of spandex, J. Crew introduced a Lycra blend suit even back in 1995. Although both manufacturers and consumers are pleased with the fashionable fit of spandex, this new fad also draws some negative responses.

The biggest advantages of using spandex are enhanced fit and improved comfort. Whether the consumer is plus-sized or simply interested in a modern look, spandex blends allow for more "give" and personalized fit than fabrics made without spandex. Beyond fashion, there are practical reasons to look for the elastic capability of spandex. Active wear made with spandex offers better support and good wicking of perspiration. Because spandex can stretch to 500 times its width without losing its original shape, even a favorite t-shirt will not become misshapen with heavy wear. Manufacturers and consumers have long known that clothes made with at least some synthetic fiber have a longer shelf life. Many people say spandex blends travel better than clothes made of natural fibers. With as little as three percent spandex in a cotton blend, the garment will significantly lose the tendency to wrinkle. That is why companies boast that by adding a little amount of spandex to their business attire, their pantsuit or blouse can be worn all day and still look crisp and sharp.

This seems too good to be true; a garment that wears longer, is more comfortable, and does not wrinkle. Unfortunately, not all people are completely satisfied with clothing made from spandex blends. Factory owners have found spandex blends hard to manage because of their lack of integrity. They are difficult to measure accurately and susceptible to bubbling and blistering if too much heat is applied during production. Consumers also complain that the product does not perform as advertised. In their May 2002 issue, *Consumer Reports* wrote that in their trials and everyday experience with shirts made from spandex blends, stains and wrinkles were a problem. The low-heat setting on an iron as recommended was not sufficient to flatten wrinkles, and a higher heat could ruin the material. The wicking capability of spandex appears to contribute to the difficulty in removing stains. In their tests, *Consumer Reports* was unable to successfully remove stains from the blend that they were able to remove from a 100 percent cotton shirt.

Cost is also a concern to both manufacturers and consumers. Clothing containing spandex on average costs more than clothes made from natural fibers. For example, a typical pair of popular spandex underwear can cost \$20 or more.

Spandex blends offer comfort, fit, wrinkle resistance, and durability. Those attributes, however, come with increased cost and care problems. Consumer should be wary. You can enjoy your stylish spandex blend garment, but be careful not to spill your soup or coffee.

**Beth is a Cornell student majoring in American Studies. She is working with TXA Extension for the summer and fall of 2004.*

Resources:

1. *Consumer Reports*, May, 2002.
2. DuPont <<http://www.dupont.com>>
3. Fibersource <<http://www.fibersource.com>>

SUPPORTING INDUSTRY

Quotas — Here Today, Gone Tomorrow

CHARLOTTE COFFMAN

At this moment, US textile and apparel imports are governed by a worldwide system of quotas that vary by nation. That's one reason why you may be wearing a shirt made in Bangladesh, slacks from Honduras, and sneakers from Korea. On January 1, 2005, the quotas will end and all World Trade Organization (WTO) members will have unrestricted access to the European, US, and Canadian markets. And that's why you may soon be wearing a shirt made in China, slacks from China, and sneakers from China.

Under the 1974 international trade agreement called the Multifiber Arrangement (MFA), the US, Canada, and Europe set numerical limits on the amounts of 2,400 different apparel and textile products that 59 different countries could import. In the current free-trade climate, quotas are coming down and businesses are following the cheapest route. In this case, all roads lead to China whose share of the US market is predicted to increase by 60 percent or more. China's competitors claim that the Chinese have an unfair advantage because their currency is artificially devalued, making their production costs cheaper than those of other countries even though countries such as Bangladesh pay workers 20 to 30 percent lower wages. The president of the National Textile Association, an organization of US manufacturers, has accused Chinese companies of "unfair and illegal practices," claiming that they copy designs from others and block imports into their country.

Hardest hit will be developing countries in the Caribbean, Central America, northern Africa, and southeast Asia. Bangladesh, alone, will lose 300,000 to 800,000 jobs. This is devastating for a small country whose textile industry employs

2.5 million people who provide economic support for an additional 30 million. In fact, textiles account for 76 percent of Bangladesh's exports, about \$5.5 billion.

Domestic textile firms in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, and Tennessee will also suffer, probably losing 600,000 jobs. This will leave only about 100,000 textile jobs in the US, mostly in the area of military products. Congress long ago passed the Berry Amendment that requires military uniforms, parachutes, camouflage material, etc. to be made in the US.

At least thirty countries have joined forces to protest the removal of quotas on textile imports. Their representatives have appealed to the WTO for a three-year delay. The WTO Council for Trading Goods will meet on October 1, 2004 to consider the issue.

One possible winner is the US consumer. The US Association of Importers of Textiles and Apparel, a trade group for 200 firms that include JC Penney, Liz Claiborne, the Gap, and the Limited, predicts that clothing prices could fall 11-20 percent.

Textiles and apparel issues of production conditions, import quotas, and product costs are very complicated. In conflict are the workers' need for jobs, the activists' efforts to raise wages, the manufacturers' push to increase profits, and the consumers' search for lower prices. Phasing out the MFA will not resolve these issues, but will change the international textile scene, transferring more jobs and wealth to China. On the home front, this issue may play a role in the upcoming fall elections, especially in the states that will lose textile jobs.

Resources:

1. Francis, David R. *Will China Clothe World?*, *Christian Science Monitor*, August 5, 2004.
2. *SOMO Bulletin on Issues in Garments & Textiles, The Phase-out of the Multifiber Arrangement*, No. 5, April, 2004. *Clean Clothes Campaign*
<<http://www.cleanclothes.org/publications/04-04-somo.htm>>
3. *US Association of Importers of Textiles and Apparel*
<<http://www.usaita.com/>>

BROWSING WEBSITES

Website: www.recalls.gov

In an effort to facilitate easier access to any and all recall information (regardless of which organization recalled the product), <www.recalls.gov> has combined the major governmental organizations' recall lists into one website. With easy navigation tabs at the top of each page, browsers can choose between seven areas of concern: consumer products, motor vehicles, boats, food, medicine, cosmetics, and environmental products. In total, five major regulatory organizations offer information dating back as far as the 1960s. Due to the abundance of recall information, the website cross-lists products based on numerous criteria including company name, date of recall, or descriptive keywords of the product if the exact name is unknown. This site also offers safety tips and the opportunity to report safety defects in a product.

Website: www.fitme.com

Fit Me aims to solve problems that bother many consumers: Confused about your size and fit in apparel shopping? Tired of shipping costs and return charges? This website is designed to help you order the right size, the **first** time in a variety of brands. It does require a little work on the part of the user — you must sign up for a FitMe ID (which is free) and enter your body measurements (it is recommended that someone measures you, though it is not necessary). After FitMe has your measurements, you may choose among clothing styles, from bathing suits to dresses, and determine your optimal fit in different brands. And, with a list of companies just under 200, it is likely that your favorite designer will be available. Once you pinpoint the appropriate size, you simply click the link to find a shirt at that designer's website. The days of returns seem to be over! Coming soon to the website are price range options to automatically narrow your choices to match your personal budget.

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